



ANG

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Ceasefire declaration

*Central Committee
Communist Party of the Philippines*

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) declares a unilateral ceasefire for the Christmas season.

The ceasefire takes effect from midnight of December 23, 2004 to midnight of January 2, 2005.

The declaration is being made in unity with the Filipino people's traditional celebration of Christmas and the New Year, and to

pave the way for the people and the revolutionary forces to celebrate the 36th anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines on December 26.

All units of the New People's Army (NPA) will continue to bear arms and remain alert and ready to fight and defeat any attacks and harassment by regular and paramilitary forces of the Armed

Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and Philippine National Police (PNP).

The CPP issues this declaration despite the Arroyo regime's continued violation of past agreements that has led to the virtual suspension of the peace talks. The Arroyo regime has, among others, failed to fulfill its commitment to take concrete measures to oppose and rectify the malicious inclusion of the CPP, NPA and NDF Peace Panel Chief Political Consultant Ka Jose Maria Sison in the US list of so-called "terrorists." The GRP and its armed forces have likewise committed relentless violations of the provisions of the CARHRIHL and the people's human rights.

The CPP issues this declaration even as it condemns the successive brutal attacks by fascist forces of the reactionary government against unarmed people peacefully protesting or asserting their



***This issue's
highlights...***

**Editorial: Struggle
against the wanton
destruction of forests**

PAGE 3

Tragedy in Aurora

PAGE 6

**Successive offensives
in Central Luzon**

PAGE 9

democratic rights. Foremost among these was the massacre of strikers at Hacienda Luisita. Recently, military forces also murdered Alyansa ng Magbubukid sa Tarlak (AMT) chair Marcelino Beltran who joined the Hacienda Luisita strike and was a witness against AFP and PNP officers and personnel as well as Hacienda Luisita officials who perpetrated the massacre. On International Human Rights Day itself, military forces indiscriminately fired at a demonstration in Daet, Camarines Sur protesting worsening violations of human rights. These fascist brutalities emphasize the need to consolidate and strengthen the people's resistance and struggles.

This declaration is being issued even as the CPP calls on the people to intensify their struggles in the face of ever-worsening hardships wrought by the economic crisis of the rotten and backward ruling social system and the unbridled greed of local and foreign big capitalists, big landlords and big bureaucrats. Prices of petroleum products and basic commodities continue to

Two-faced scheme

The Arroyo regime's unilateral ceasefire declaration is a deceptive scheme. The regime has no intention of stopping relentless military operations against units of the New People's Army (NPA) in various guerrilla fronts nationwide. The AFP and PNP conduct their counterrevolutionary military operations in the guise of launching "police operations."

In fact, two Red fighters were killed when the 11th IB's Charlie Coy attacked an NPA unit on December 20 in Hacienda Emma, Barangay Camang-Camang, Isabela, Negros Occidental. A soldier was killed and six were wounded on the AFP side.

That same day, the 17th IB conducted operations in four barrios of Baggao, Cagayan. On December 16, elements of the 5th Scout Rangers Regiment engaged NPA guerrillas in Agusan del Sur. The 16th IB is also undertaking military operations in Sta. Cruz, Mindoro Occidental.

These are just a few of the military operations presently being launched by the AFP in various parts of the country. The Arroyo regime declared a ceasefire from December 16, 2004 to January 5, 2005.

AB

rise, while workers' wages are kept low. The Arroyo regime imposes additional tax burdens even as corruption within the highest echelons of the civilian and military bureaucracy worsens.

This declaration is being made even as the CPP condemns the duplicity of the Arroyo regime in

declaring a Christmas ceasefire while AFP and PNP forces continue with their military campaigns and operations against NPA guerrilla fronts across the archipelago. Often, in many places and smack into their "ceasefire" period, the AFP and PNP intensify their attacks in the name of "police operations." All units of the NPA must therefore be ever alert and ready against the possibility of treacherous attacks by the AFP and PNP.

On this occasion, we give particular attention to the people along the Sierra Madre ranges, from the Bicol region to Southern Tagalog, Central and Northern Luzon who suffered gravely from the calamity brought about by the widespread destruction of forests by big commercial loggers and exporters who collaborate with the imperialists and big bureaucrat capitalists. As instructed by the CPP, all NPA units in the area are extending all possible assistance to calamity victims.

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angbayan@yahoo.com

Contents

Ceasefire declaration	1
Two-faced scheme	2
Editorial	
Struggle against the destruction of forests and the environment!	3
The DENR and logging	4
History of deforestation	4
Mass struggles against logging	5
Movement against logging	5
Tragedy in Aurora	6
Movement against logging in Aurora	7
Mining Act of 1995	8
Victorious NPA offensives	
Successive offensives in CL	10
News	11

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Struggle against the wanton destruction of Philippine forests and the environment!

A great majority of the victims of the recent flash flood and landslides are not being reached by the limited relief work being undertaken by the Arroyo regime. Only a measly few among the hundreds of thousands of victims have received token assistance in the form of clothing, noodles and canned goods. Despite hyped-up publicity accompanying its relief operations, the Arroyo regime has, in fact, provided minuscule funding to help in the people's rehabilitation. This is made worse by bureaucratic irresponsibility and bickering within the reactionary government.

But beyond its failure to provide for the needs of the calamity victims, the reactionary Arroyo regime's bigger crime lies in its continued promotion of the wanton plunder and destruction of Philippine forests and the environment by giant logging and mining companies owned by big bourgeois compradors, big bureaucrats and foreign big capitalists.

Amid heightened public anger against massive deforestation, Arroyo declared on December 4 the total suspension of logging operations, only to "clarify" this three days later with "an order to allow private plantations to continue harvesting and cutting logs".

With much hype, she appointed Gen. Victor Corpus, former chief of the Intelligence Service of the AFP, to head an anti-illegal logging task force and to

"oversee" nationwide re-

forestation. Corpus' appointment, however, has more to do with "counterinsurgency" than concern for the forests. In the early 1990s, Corpus initiated "Task Force Greening Panay" which served only as a component for military counterinsurgency operations and land-grabbing activities.

The reactionary Arroyo regime has no intentions of seriously addressing the biggest causes of the massive denudation of forests and the destruction of the environment: reckless and large-scale logging and mining operations. In fact, it is earnestly shoring up the timber and mining industries by enticing foreign capitalists and big bourgeois investors with liberalized policies on the operations, ownership and commercial undertakings of logging and mining companies.

The Arroyo regime is giving these plunderers all the freedom to ravage further the Philippine environment.

Furthermore, the Arroyo regime is going all-out in the implementation of the

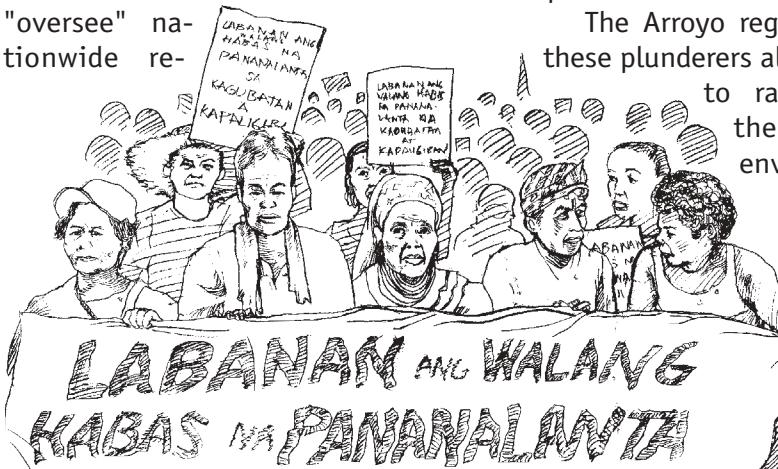
1995 Philippine Mining Act. In 1997, foreign mining companies, mostly Australian and Canadian applied for mining concessions covering around 9.2 million hectares.

The Mining Act encourages the further wanton depletion of forest land by giving permission to big mining companies to clear wide swaths of forest areas to construct mining roads and meet their other needs. These companies are exempted from environmental impact assessments. Foreigners are allowed 100% ownership of mining companies and allowed 100% repatriation of their profits.

The imperialists and their local collaborators are not in the least worried about the denudation of our forests, the destruction of the environment, and the welfare of our people. Their only concern is to abscond with the superprofits from their plunder of the country's natural wealth. From 1972 to 1988, conservative estimates place the income of logging concessions at \$42.85 billion to \$52 billion.

They use the bureaucracy and employ the military to actively promote their interests. These criminals do not have the slightest regard for the Filipino people's national patrimony. With government's nod, big comprador-capitalists, bureaucrat capitalists, smuggling syndicates and top military commanders have collaborated with US and Japanese imperialists in the unbridled depletion of our forests.

Bureaucrat capitalists indirectly pocket huge amounts from logging by taking bribes from big timber companies, and directly from the operations of their own logging



companies. Local and national politicians are invariably involved in logging. A large part of the wealth of politicians and warlords come from logging.

Logging operations, government-licensed and otherwise, along with drug trafficking, illegal gambling and other syndicated crimes have been the most lucrative source of ill-gotten wealth among the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) top brass as well as Malacañang insiders.

The military and police are also utilized to clear the way for the operations of logging and mining companies. They trample on the people's political, economic and cultural rights in an effort to suppress resistance.

Oftentimes, in collaboration

The DENR and logging

Former secretaries of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) are involved in logging. Heherson Alvarez owns and operates FCA Timber in Nueva Vizcaya. Antonio Cerilles operates his own logging company that has concession areas in intact primary forests in Mindanao. Fulgencio Factoran, Jr. environment secretary under the Aquino regime, together with Aquino's cousin Ding Tanjuatco, operated NAREDCO which controlled timber companies such as Acme Inc. and Taggat Industries in the Cagayan Valley region. AB

with environment officials, army and police forces pretend to confiscate illegally cut logs just to provide legal cover for their transport until these are finally delivered to their illegal buyers.

The worsening environmental crisis is part and parcel of the deepening chronic crisis of the rul-

ing semicolonial and semifeudal system. It is the peasant masses, fisherfolk and minority peoples in the countryside and hinterlands who bear the brunt of the environmental crisis.

The destruction of the Philippine environment and natural resources will continue to worsen with the further aggravation of the crisis of the semicolonial and semifeudal system. Local industrial and agricultural production continue to falter as the reactionary state continues to rely on foreign capital infusion to spur production. There is widespread destruction of local productive forces as the crisis of the world capitalist system recoils on the local economy.

The backwardness of the semicolonial and semifeudal economy is again being brought to the fore as the local exploiting classes of big bourgeois compradors and big landlords resort to the wholesale destruction of the remaining frontiers of the Philippines' national patrimony. Such desperation is leading to the out and out liberalization of policies with regard to operations of logging and mining companies; and to the outright plunder of the few remaining forest and mineral resources.

In the face of the Arroyo regime's policies to bolster logging and mining operations and its total disregard for the environment, the Communist Party of the Philippines and the en-

History of deforestation

Massive deforestation and environmental destruction are a historical problem. The massive denudation of the Sierra Madre and other mountain ranges in the Philippines, as well as the destruction of river systems and aquatic resources are a result of rampant logging and mining operations from the very outset of the US imperialist plunder and rape of our country.

Within the 20th century, the Philippines lost around 90% of its forest cover. More than 13.2 million hectares of forest cover were lost due to the plunder of our forests during the last 50 years of the puppet republic. The rate of deforestation was steepest from 1945 until the end of the 1980s.

From the 1950s to the 1980s, the export of logs became one of the biggest dollar earners and one of the most lucrative sources of ill-gotten wealth for Malacañang and officials of government environment agencies. In 1975, logging companies protected by the Marcos dictatorship produced as much as 15.5 million cubic meters of timber, the highest annual output ever. From 1972 to 1988, as much as 8.57 million hectares of forested area and 3.8 million hectares of virgin forests were destroyed.

By the end of the 1980s, the rate of deforestation slowed down, simply because very little has been left of our forest cover. Total forest cover was just around one million hectares. By 1999, only 800,000 hectares of primary forest remained, two-thirds of which are already degraded. This has prompted widespread calls to ban logging and undertake reforestation efforts. AB

tire revolutionary movement reiterate their commitment to struggle against the rape of the Filipino people's national patrimony.

The most crucial element in the struggle against the wanton destruction of the environment is the people's collective struggle and their resolute resistance to logging and mining operations that imperil their environment, their livelihood and their lives.

The CPP and all revolutionary forces will undertake efforts to raise the people's understanding of the history of plunder and rape of the Philippine forests carried out by foreign big companies and local big compradors as well as the culpability of the Arroyo regime in perpetuating this systematic ravaging of our environment. The CPP will intensify efforts to organize the people and help them in their struggles against the reactionary state's sham reforestation program as well as against the renewed campaign to allow mining operations.

Wherever it can, the New People's Army will prevent the entry of logging companies, or compel them to strictly abide by the laws of the people's revolutionary government to ensure the interests of the masses in the locality and the judicious use of forest resources. As in the past, it will carry out efforts to punish or penalize entities that trample on the people's interests, destroy the environment and violate the laws of the people's democratic government. AB

Mass struggles against logging

Since the very day large-scale logging began, the people, especially national minorities, have vigorously struggled against it. In 1971, the Higaonon people in Agusan del Norte fought heroic battles against NALCO (Nasipit Lumber Corporation) and their hired armed goons and soldiers. Through militant struggle, they were able to temporarily stop NALCO from expanding its logging operations. Their struggle persisted through the 1980s under the auspices of the national democratic movement.

The Tinggian people fiercely resisted the operations of Cellophil Resources, Inc., a paper manufacturing company owned by Marcos crony Herminio Disini. They barricaded their villages in Abra to block the entry of Cellophil.

The Boise Cascade Inc. logging company was driven out of the forests of Zamboanga Peninsula in 1988 through the collective efforts of the Subanen people. Since 1994, they have been struggling against the Canadian-owned mining company Toronto Ventures Inc. and the military and paramilitary forces that serve as its armed security force.

In 1994, Ata-Manobo warriors in Talaingod, Davao del Norte declared a *pangayaw* or tribal war, rising up in arms against the encroachment of Alsons, Inc. into their land. They have continued to militantly oppose the operations of Alsons despite the latter's use of military force.

In the same year, the B'laan people launched protest actions demanding an end to the operations of Western Mining Corporation in several towns in North and South Cotabato and Davao del Sur. They declared a *pangayaw* against the 74th IB. Several armed encounters have ensued. AB

The revolutionary movement against logging

To obscure its responsibility in continuing to promote large-scale logging and the export of lumber, the Arroyo regime has shifted the blame to the New People's Army and the revolutionary movement for the denudation of the Sierra Madre mountains and the death and destruction that occurred in the wake of the recent typhoons. The Arroyo regime has resorted to utter lies to malign the NPA. It shirks responsibility for the loss of more than a thousand lives and the economic displacement of hundreds of thousands of people.

In unity with the toiling masses, the New People's Army has been exerting efforts, wherever and whenever it can, to stop the wanton destruction of the environment by preventing or fighting the operations of logging and mining companies and meting punishment on military forces that serve as their security forces.

The record shows that it is the NPA, in conjunction with the revolutionary masses, that have been most militant and resolute in the struggle against the massive destruction of the environment.

The CPP, the NPA and the revolutionary movement have taken strong measures to warn perpetrators of wanton logging operations, whether licensed or not by the reactionary state. The NPA has imposed fines as a form of penalty on logging companies that violate the people's rights as well as the policies of the revolutionary government. It has carried out measures to punish the incorrigible ones.

In the 1970s, the NPA intensified its tactical offensives in the Cordillera region to assist in the struggles against Cellophil and the

Chico River Dam project.

In 1985, the New People's Army in Cagayan Valley carried out Oplan Lappat, a campaign to defend the forests from further depredation by logging companies. In 1991, the NPA launched a coordinated effort to punish the inveterate plunderers of the forests by disabling all logging equipment in Gattaran, Cagayan and Luna, Kalinga-Apayao.

In 1995, the National Democratic Front (NDF)-Mindanao declared war on logging to underscore the revolutionary forces' commitment to protect forest resources. Revolutionary mass organizations are mobilized to ensure that policies with regard to logging are strictly followed by logging concessionaires. The policies include, among others, limiting the allowable volume to be logged, prohibiting the cutting of immature trees, banning logging in watershed areas and requiring loggers to plant trees and contribute to the welfare of the masses in the area. In other cases, logging companies are discouraged to continue with their operations.

Since the last decade, the revolutionary forces in Southern Tagalog have been carrying out a campaign to encourage small loggers to resume agricultural production and intensify their struggle for genuine land reform. This addresses the fact that small loggers, contemptuously called "carabao loggers", have been forced to sell their labor to big logging companies after they were uprooted from their lands by massive land conversion and land grabbing in the early 1990s.

In December last year, an NPA unit raided a logging camp of Pacific Timber Export Corporation (PATECO) in Dinapigue, Isabela. Several bulldozers and 20 trucks laden with logs were set afire. They encountered forces of the Philippine Army 5th ID guarding trucksfull of timber. In September 2000, Red fighters stopped the operations of Liberty Logging Corp. in Jones, Isabela by razing the company's equipment.

Applying democratic methods, the Party, the people's army and the revolutionary people's organizations have also gone through the extent of actively promoting and advancing sustainable agriculture to more than compensate for the revolutionary restrictions even on small logging operations of some forest region residents. At the same time, the Party and revolutionary organizations have also advised small swidden farmers or *kaingeros* on correct methods to ensure the protection of the forests. AB

Tragedy in Aurora

One of the areas worst hit by calamity in November and December was the province of Aurora. Four of its eight municipalities sustained serious damage, and 11 barangays along the coastal areas of San Luis and Dingalan towns, which lie adjacent to each other were nearly obliterated. Hundreds perished and several thousands lost their homes in the landslides and flash floods that came in the wake of four successive typhoons.

Thousands of logs carried downstream when raging waters cascaded down the mountains were a glaring sight especially along the Dingalan coastline. This comes as no surprise since concessions owned by 10 logging companies cover 247,772 hectares or 82.6% of the province's entire land area. The largest among them are the Industries Development Corporation (57,069 hectares in Calasag, Casiguran and Dingalan); Inter-Pacific Forest Resources Corp. (50,000 hectares in Dilasag); Verdant Agroforest Development Corp. (45,600 hectares in Dipaculao, Aurora and Nagtipunan, Quirino); Pacific Timber Export Corp. (33,454 hectares in Dilasag, Aurora and Dinapigue, Isabela); and Green Circle Properties and Resources Corp. (27,852 hectares in Dingalan).

For many decades, the Ong family which owned the largest logging concessions in Aurora controlled reactionary politics in the province. The Ongs are allies of the Dy dynasty of Isabela.

That the Ong family had firm links to the fascist military and police, who in turn protected their businesses has long been evident. The Ong-owned Industries Development Corp. is situated right next to the Philippine Army and PNP Provincial Mobile Group's camps in Casiguran, Aurora. It was an open secret even then that the logging companies allotted no less than 10% of their capital to bribe the military and 15% to the governor to ensure that no one interfered with their operations.

Since the mid-1980's, through his position as senator, Edgardo Angara's clan slowly overtook the Ongs in controlling the province's politics and economy. Angara is now regarded as the godfather and protector of the big logging companies in Aurora. Among those closest to him is Green Circle owner Romeo Roxas.

Its control of logging companies and other big businesses in Aurora has enabled members of the Angara clan to take turns in holding important local government positions. Angara's sister, Bellaflor Angara-Castillo, used to represent Aurora's lone congressional district and is now the provincial governor. Angara's son Sonny is the present congressman of Aurora. His relatives also hold positions in the local government of Baler, their hometown.

In Metro Manila, Edgardo Angara furiously denied his clan's role in the death of so many people in Aurora and the destruction of their property and livelihood. Back in Aurora, however, his sister could not but come to the defense of big commercial logging and express opposition to a total logging ban. She was in chorus with Malacañang and DENR officials in heaping blame on small and so-called illegal loggers for the disaster that had taken place.

Ka Martin, a Party cadre in Aurora, strongly refuted the assertion that the massive landslides and flash floods were caused by what the government considered as illegal loggers—the *kaingeros* (slash-and-burn farmers) and businessmen engaged in the small-scale cutting, hauling, buying and export of logs. "Whatever damage they cause," he said, "is far smaller than that wrought by the big operators. Just by the act of constructing logging roads, the gigantic companies



already excavate huge volumes of earth from the mountainside and cut down so many trees."

"We pity the small operators because it is they who will surely feel the heat from the government campaign," says Ka Martin. "From the government's point of view, it is they who are illegal because they cannot afford to offer bribes and

engage in shady deals."

"The fact is that no one is really legal, in the strict sense of the word," he added. "Even companies that have been given logging permits systematically violate laws and policies promulgated by the reactionary government ostensibly

continued on "Tragedy...," page 8

Mass movement against logging in Aurora

In 1995, the revolutionary movement in Aurora declared a total ban on commercial logging and even on the exportation of logs. The move was spurred by the fact that Aurora was the only province left in Central Luzon that still had relatively dense forest cover. Cutting logs was allowed only to make furniture and construct houses and schools and other community needs. That same year, the people's mass actions likewise put a stop to the operations of Kasibu Company, a logging corporation that also had concessions in Isabela and Nueva Vizcaya. The revolutionary movement also stopped collecting revolutionary taxes from logging companies.

After half a year, however, the total logging ban policy was deemed to be "ultra-Left," because it affected only the small loggers and other people living within guerrilla zones who depended on logging to survive. The big logging companies operating outside the guerrilla zones were left untouched.

The policy thus ran counter to the class line because it was the exploited classes and not the ex-

ploiting classes that were affected.

In rectifying, the revolutionary forces emphasized extensive education campaigns, encouraged the peasants to return to farming, and implemented various forms of agricultural cooperation.

This was in recognition of the fact that as long as there were no alternative livelihoods for the poor, the latter would always be forced to latch on to the big logging companies—thus making a total ban on commercial logging unjust and incapable of succeeding.

Because a total logging ban could as yet not be effected and to alleviate the exploitation of small wood-cutters by big logging companies, the revolutionary movement has been organizing the people to fight for more just payment for wood sold to the gigantic logging companies. Nonetheless, swidden farmers and small wood-cutters are required to plant hardwood, fruit-bearing and coconut trees to replace the trees they have felled.

This campaign is being carried out in all guerrilla zones in the province.

AB

Mining Act of 1995: A scourge on the Filipino people

Even before a series of typhoons battered the eastern part of Luzon, another disaster has been devastating the country. The culprit—the Supreme Court's decision on December 1 upholding the "legality" of the Financial and Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAA) between the Arroyo government and Western Mining Corp., an Australian company. The WMC, which holds a 99,000-hectare mining concession in southern Mindanao, was the first company granted an FTAA after RA 7942 or the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 was enacted under the Ramos regime.

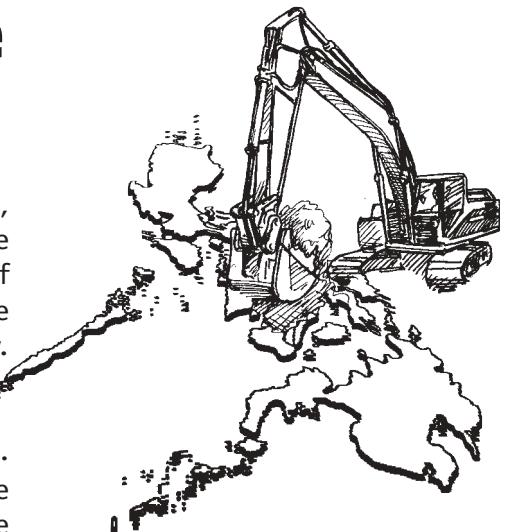
In its decision, the Supreme Court likewise declared that the Mining Act, which allows mining companies that are at least 60% foreign owned to exploit the country's mineral resources, was not violative of the reactionary constitution. This is contrary to an earlier decision by the court on January 27 declaring that the FTAA directly violates the constitutional provision granting Filipinos the exclusive right to exploit the country's national patrimony.

The decision is but the latest of several Supreme Court rulings nullifying whatever constitutional provisions remain protecting the national patrimony. The Arroyo regime plans to complete the process by amending the constitution in 2005, scrapping altogether Article 12 and similar provisions concerning the national patrimony and economic sovereignty.

Meanwhile, we can expect more of the same from the Supreme

Court in the face of the severe financial crisis besetting the Arroyo regime. The court has candidly admitted that a major factor influencing its decision on the Mining Act was the need to boost the country's long-stagnant economy. It founded its decision on National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) statistics saying the country would benefit from the entry of up to \$10 billion worth of foreign investments and the creation of 251,826 new jobs if foreigners were allowed to exploit the country's \$840 billion mineral reserves. They deliberately turned a blind eye not only on the direct contradiction between the Mining Act and the puppet republic's own constitution, but moreso on the devastation that large-scale and unmitigated mining would bring on the welfare of the people and the environment.

As a result of the Supreme Court decision, the Department of



Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has been swamped by 30 foreign companies applying for permits to conduct exploration in various parts of the country early next year. The affected areas are mainly in Mindanao, particularly along the border of Bukidnon with the Davao provinces and in Surigao del Norte and Surigao del Sur. The approval of 23 mining applications in the Cordillera covering 77,000 hectares is also pending.

The people of Bukidnon and the Surigao provinces vehemently oppose mining operations in the area, saying that environmental destruction would also wreak havoc on the livelihood of peasants and national minority groups who would be driven out of their ancestral lands. Large-scale mining

continued on "Mining Act...," page 10

"Tragedy...," from page 7

for the benefit of the people and the environment." For instance, he said, these companies routinely violate limits set by the DENR on the volume of logs they could cut. "Loggers who have long filled up their quotas just have their permits recycled over and over so they could continue cutting logs," he said.

Ka Martin also refuted assertions that significant reforestation has taken place. If any, it is in places near the highway so that the logging companies have

something to show. "The IFMA (Integrated Forest Management Agreement), that calls for loggers to plant Gmelina is sheer nonsense," he says. "These fragile wood trees cannot hold back raging flood waters. In reality," he said, "Gmelina trees actually worsen the denudation of forests and mountains because they kill off other tree species as well as other crops and vegetation in surrounding areas."

"The biggest illegal logger is none other than the state," Ka Martin emphasized, "and this is evident in the tragedy that occurred in Aurora." AB



Successive offensives in Central Luzon

Four successive tactical offensives launched in the second week of December demonstrate the higher fighting capacity of the New People's Army (NPA) in Central Luzon. Adding those confiscated in the Bulacan ambush on November 30, the Red fighters accumulated 32 assorted firearms, including three M203 grande launchers and an M60 machine gun, computers, communication equipment and important documents. Eighteen government troops and a security guard were killed in these offensives.

In Nueva Ecija. Red fighters boldly attacked the municipal hall and the Philippine National Police (PNP) station of Carranglan town at around 6:30 in the evening of December 15. Without firing a single shot, the NPA seized the armalites of four policemen in a matter of five minutes. The Red guerrillas had earlier set up a checkpoint in Barangay Padilla where they commandeered four vehicles which they used for the assault.

In Tarlac. NPA partisan operatives arrested and punished SPO2 Froilan Biag, an operative of the Tarlac PNP Intelligence Division, in Sitio Molave, Barangay

San Isidro, Tarlac City on the night of December 14. According to the Nelson Mesina Command, Biag was sentenced to death because of his espionage activities against the revolutionary movement. The guerrillas merely disarmed and did not harm another policeman who was with Biag at the time of his arrest. The partisans confiscated an M16, a .45 pistol and a number of valuable documents.

In Pampanga. Red fighters attacked the tactical command post (TCP) of the 69th IB's Special Operations Team in Barangay Masangsang, Mexico, Pampanga on December 12. According to the Josepino Corpuz Command of the NPA-Central Luzon, the raid was undertaken a few weeks after local officials complained to the NPA about the presence of abusive military elements in the barrios on the eastern part of Mexico, Pampanga.

At around 2:30 in the afternoon, a team under the Palermo Ortañez Command arrived aboard a van at the

continued on "Successive...," page 10

"Mining Act...," from page 8

would pollute watersheds and aquatic sources of livelihood such as streams, rivers and seas. AGHAM, a University of the Philippines-based group of scientists has tagged mining and logging operations of big foreign firms as the causes of environmental degradation.

The most recent example of the "domino effect" destruction wrought by large-scale and unmitigated mining took place in Marinduque in 1996 when Marcopper-Placer Dome disposed of three million tons of toxic chemicals in the Boac River. The toxic waste which found its way to Calancan Bay caused the death of the river and the destruction of the livelihood not only of several thousand people who depended on it but also of the peasants whose crops were

destroyed when the contaminated water overflowed and inundated their farms. Earlier, the company's siltation dam also gave way in 1993, contaminating the Mogpog River with toxic chemicals like mercury. A number of residents of the affected area have since died of mercury poisoning.

Lepanto Consolidated Mining, meanwhile, has been blamed for the environmental destruction and fish kills in the Abra River since 2003, and health disorders among people living along the banks of the river from Benguet to Ilocos Sur and Abra. The mercury that Benguet Consolidated releases into the river has also been proven to have reached Lingayen Gulf in Pangasinan after fish caught in the gulf were found to have high concentrations of mercury. The Baguio City landslides during the 1990 earthquake are also believed to have been

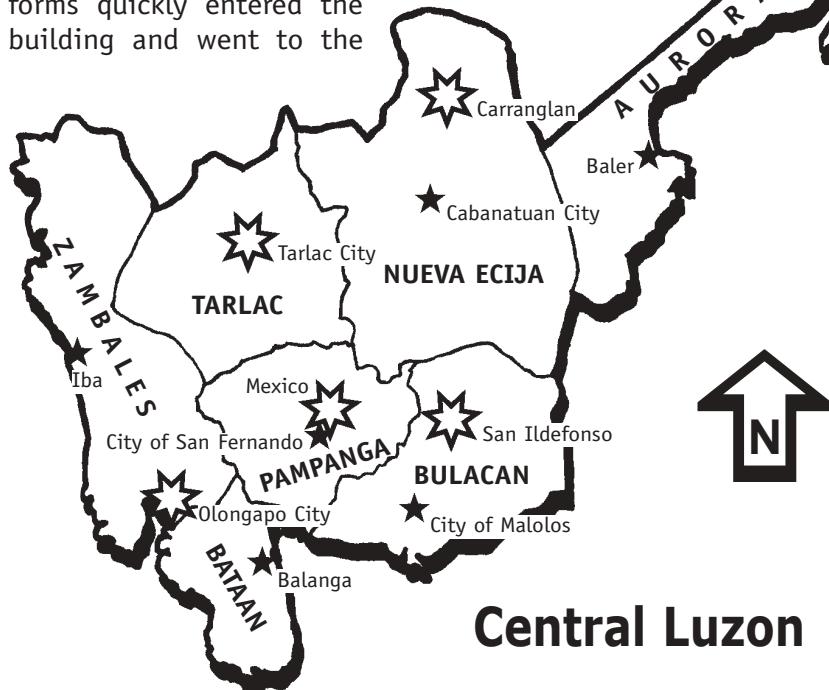
caused by large-scale mining.

In Southern Mindanao, the National Democratic Front estimates that some 800,000 peasants and lumads will be displaced by the large-scale destruction and more brutal military campaigns that accompany large-scale mining operations.

According to NDF-SMR spokesperson Rubi del Mundo, mining explorations and open-pit mining in the region will result in the massive denudation of forests and the siltation of rivers and streams. Such damage has already been wrought on the Kingking River in Pantukan, Compostela Valley due to the operations of Echo Bay's Kingking Gold Copper Concession, Toronto Ventures, Inc. and Benguet Mining Corp. in the area. As a result, the river easily overflows during the rainy season, causing landslides and flash floods.

AB

Castro Building in the town center. The four Red fighters dressed in soldier's uniforms quickly entered the building and went to the



TCP on the second floor which also served as a safehouse for military intelligence agents. Two soldiers who happened to be at the TCP were disarmed and treated well by the guerrillas.

The entire operation was over in 20 minutes. The NPA seized three M16s, an M203, two computers, two cellphones, a GPS receiver, documents and uniforms.

In Zambales. Red fighters aboard a motor vehicle raided a police detachment in Barangay Bareto, Olongapo City on the evening of December 9. Three policemen and their security guard asset were killed and another policeman was wounded. Among those killed was Police Station 6 deputy commander Sr. Insp. Ernesto Cruz. The NPA seized three M16 rifles.

According to Communist Party of the Philippines-Central Luzon spokesperson Salud Rojas, these assaults signal the intensification of NPA tactical offensives in the region against the AFP and PNP which attack unarmed and defenseless civilians. **AB**

NEWS

CPP condoles with death of FPJ

THE Communist Party of the Philippines expressed its condolences on the death of actor and former presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. (FPJ). In a statement on December 14, CPP spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal noted FPJ's interest in social issues and how he often used to invite comrades to his house to hold discussions on the work of the revolutionary movement. Ka Roger said FPJ never hesitated to extend whatever support he could for undertakings that would benefit the worker and peasant masses. As presidential candidate in the last election, FPJ also expressed interest in the peace talks and addressing the roots of the civil war.

FPJ was Gloria Arroyo's closest rival in the last election, and was among the victims of widespread fraud and black propaganda perpetrated by the regime. In their outrage, FPJ's supporters rejected and destroyed the flower wreaths sent by Arroyo and her allies Jose de Venecia and Franklin Drilon. Hundreds of thousands up to a million people are expected to join his funeral march on December 22.

FPJ died in a hospital in the early morning of December 14 at the age of 65 after suffering a massive stroke.

BOP deficit shoots up

THE balance-of-payments (BOP) deficit shot up to \$459 million or ₱25.7 billion in November after increasing by \$275 million that month, compared to a \$6 million hike in October. It is expected to reach \$516 million by the end of the year.

The BOP deficit ballooned in November mainly due to the government's servicing of part of its huge debt to foreign institutions.

Not even the remittances of overseas contract workers (OCW) could compensate for the amount the government needs to pay each month in debts. OCWs bring in up to \$8 billion or ₱448 billion annually to the country's ailing economy. The country's debt, on the other hand, now comes to ₱3.73 trillion.

The BOP is the balance of moneys that enter and leave the country through transactions that include foreign trade, OCW remittances, foreign investment and debt service.